

COLORADO TO KOKO NOR

The amazing true story of the CIA's secret war against Red China

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STATINTL

By L. FLETCHER PROUTY

NIGHT HAD obscured the mountains when the Air Force cargo plane finally approached the Pikes Peak country from the west. Warily, it seemed, the aircraft crossed the south shoulder of the peak, turned left, dropped flaps and began the long, gradual descent to Peterson Field which serves both as an Air Force base and the municipal airport of Colorado Springs.

The landing was uneventful. But from that point some strange things happened.

The aircraft, a heavy-bodied C130 powered by four turbo-prop engines, taxied to a remote end of the field rather than to the regular ramp. A military bus quickly pulled up alongside.

If any outsider had been there to witness some 20 men disembark, he would have been told they were soldiers from India scheduled for training at nearby Ft. Carson under a military aid program.

But the troops weren't Indians and they never got to Ft. Carson.

The loaded bus headed westward out of Colorado Springs, up the Ute Pass highway, and disappeared into the night.

During the months that followed, other men like those in the first contingent arrived periodically in Colorado Springs in

the same mysterious manner and vanished into the mountains.

The identity of these men and the nature of their mission makes a fascinating story — and, in some respects, a frightening one — with vast international implications. Recent developments in relations between the United States and Communist China, which portend so much for an era of peace, give that story a special timeliness. The details of this operation are reported here for the first time.

To understand what this hush-hush operation was all about, it is necessary to set the time, which was August 1959, and to recall the ominous twilight zone — neither peace nor war — into which relations between East and West had drifted in that period. With an eye toward the successful culmination of his two-term administration, President Eisenhower announced a series of international events leading to a super-Summit Conference in Paris during May 1960.

The Korean War had settled into an uneasy truce six years earlier, in 1953. The Berlin Wall was still two years in the future, 1961. At the moment the point of East-West friction was at a most mythical land to most Americans

who connected it vaguely with a Ronald Coleman movie about Shangri-la.

There is nothing mythical about Tibet. It is an ancient country with an area four times that of Colorado, separated from India to the south by the Himalayan Range, many of whose peaks are twice as tall as Colorado's highest mountains. The country's average elevation is about 15,000 feet. Soon after the Communist government took over control of China in 1949, Peking announced its intentions of "liberating" Tibet. In October 1950 Chinese Communist troops invaded it.

Tibet's spiritual and temporal leader, the Dalai Lama, then only 15 years old, urged his people not to resist. The Chinese in turn left the Dalai Lama alone. But by February of 1959 it became evident the Chinese intended to seize him to gain undisputed control over that country.

Forewarned, the Dalai Lama and about 80 of his followers fled Lhasa, the capital city on March 17, 1959, heading for the safety of India. The Chinese were not aware of the Dalai Lama's departure for several days. They had been lulled by the fact that there were only two good routes out of Lhasa, both under Chinese control, and any caravan leaving for India would have had to

Tibetans in Exile: Youth Gap Threatens Their Culture

By Colin MacAndrews

The writer teaches in the Faculty of Environmental Studies at Canada's York University, specializing in India, Tibet and the Himalayan states.

IN JULY, a Tibetan refugee named Gungthang Ngodup complained to the Supreme Court of India that the Dalai Lama's officials were subjecting Tibetans in India to "intimidation, torture and even liquidation."

In September, the Hindustan Times reported that the Dalai Lama was marrying an American. The story was immediately denied and blamed on "anti-Buddhist elements." Tibetan refugee leaders issued a joint statement reaffirming the Dalai Lama's religious and secular authority over all the 85,000 Tibetans who had fled into exile in India, Bhutan, Sikkim and Nepal when the Chinese seized control over Tibet in 1959.

Another recent event: The minister for refugee affairs in the Dalai Lama's cabinet went to visit a Tibetan refugee camp outside New Delhi. Despite an escort of 12 Indian policemen, the minister was run out of the camp by hostile refugees.

All these incidents show the great cleavage that has rent the formerly unified Tibetan exile community in the past year.

The cleavage is essentially political, and it is between the younger generation of Tibetans who are becoming integrated into Indian life and the older order epitomized in the central Tibetan Refugee Administration based in Dharmasala, India. For the officials in Dharmasala are mostly still those who were in power in Tibet until the Dalai Lama fled into exile in 1959.

The Kashag — for centuries the main advisory committee to the Dalai Lama in Tibet — still exists in Dharmasala today. When I visited Dharmasala this summer it was meeting nightly to discuss ways of dealing with the split.

The Dalai Lama himself — at 37, the 14th in a line that stretches back to the 17th Century — is becoming disillusioned and weary.

"It is very difficult for a Buddhist monk in the 20th Century to act as an

administrator," he told me in his house outside Dharmasala. "I am not capable of carrying on as a leader any more, and I now want to devote the rest of my life to the practice of the Buddhist faith."

An Act Without Precedent

IF THE DALAI LAMA were to resign, as he speaks so strongly of doing, the effects would be dramatic.

The Dalai Lamas for centuries have been the spiritual and political leaders of Tibet; while Tibetans may be antagonistic to his ministers and to his administrators, he is still their sole head. No Dalai Lama has ever resigned, and there is no mechanism for finding a replacement. His resignation could only have a devastating effect on the already fractured unity of the Tibetan community in exile. It would also have an immense effect on the Tibetan resistance movement that is still fighting Communist rule in Tibet itself.

There have been constant reports over the last few years of Tibetan guerrilla activities in Lhasa, the capital, and in the eastern regions of the country. One report a few months ago told of a Tibetan Freedom Committee being set up in Lhasa; another described the public execution of 15 Tibetans in the central square of Lhasa last January for treason against China.

From the Mustang area in northern Nepal, an army estimated at 7,000 Kham warriors from eastern Tibet has been harassing Chinese troops and garrisons across the border for the last 10 years. Indian newspapers have reported that this Tibetan army is supplied by the CIA and the Indian government, and a rare foreign visitor to the remote Mustang region told me of the modern arms and supplies he saw there this summer.

But for all this resistance, the Chinese have succeeded not only in changing the face of Tibet but in destroying the old society and civilization.

For a land that until the early 1950s had no airfields or paved highways, Tibet today is a developed country with modern communications. The Chinese have built no fewer than seven jet airfields on the Tibetan plateau, the latest at Pomda in eastern Tibet.

Tibet and China, and offshoots run through Ladakh on the Tibet-Kashmir border and also down to the strategic passes to India's North East Frontier Agency, Sikkim and Nepal.

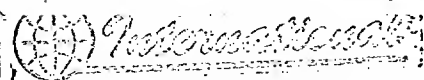
And the old society, and the traditions and art forms of the unique Tibetan culture, have been destroyed.

This destruction reached a climax in May, 1967, when China's Cultural Revolution reached Tibet in the form of 500 Red Guards. For months they looted and destroyed the monasteries that enshrined the long tradition of Tibetan learning and art reaching back to the 7th Century. Manuscripts were destroyed, and statues and paintings taken to China by the truckload. Today three of the largest and most important monasteries — Samye, Sakya and Tashi Llungpo — are used as military storehouses.

As a result of this deliberate destruction of the Tibetan way of life, the only remaining living tradition is in the hands of the Tibetans in exile in India. The exiles have made every attempt to keep the Tibetan traditions alive. All Tibetan children born in India are taught Tibetan, a Tibetan university was established in northern India in 1962, and a new library and cultural center has just been completed in Dharmasala.

But if the Dalai Lama resigns and the factional fighting that has been going on among the Tibetan community for over a year now breaks into the open, all these efforts could fail. It could be the end of a unique civilization.

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Gaps in Nixon-Mao publicity

By TOM FOLEY

Henry Kissinger's trip to Peking and the forthcoming visit of President Nixon to the People's Republic of China are now getting tremendous publicity in the U.S. news media. But many questions about this apparent U.S.-PRC rapprochement remain unanswered—at least, publicly—and the detailed speculation in the U.S. press deliberately seems to avoid these areas. They are the following:

1) Northern Burma and Laos: ever since the Chinese civil war, the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency has been deeply involved in this region just south of the Chinese province with the romantic name of Yunnan, or "Cloudy South" province. In 1949, the defeated remnants of Chiang Kai-shek's army crossed over into north Burma and Laos, seized control of these outlying areas, and began calling themselves the Yunnan Anti-Communist, and National Salvation Army. Actually, they are the biggest opium dealers in Southeast Asia and they have been financed and armed since 1949 by the CIA.

In Laos, the CIA organized, trained and equipped the 50,000-man secret army led by Gen. Vang Pao, composed of his Meo tribesmen followers, who are the biggest opium smugglers in South-east Asia. But everybody knows that the CIA created this Meo military force not only for use in Laos: in Yunnan, there are 4.5 million Meo tribesmen who form the most important national minority in south China and who have maintained their ties with their relatives across the Laos border.

2) Tibet and northern Nepal: in 1959, when revolt broke out among the Amdo and Khampa tribesmen of Tibet, it did not require great insight to see the CIA hand involved in it. The Khampas were armed with brand new U.S. equipment, including GI fatigue uniforms and thermoboots. Since both Tibetans and Chinese hate and fear the Khampas, the CIA made a serious political mistake in backing them, because everybody else allied against them. They did get the Dalai Lama, however, probably because he is of Amdo, not Tibetan origin, and was born in China. About 20,000 Khampas

and Amdos fled mainly into northern Nepal after the 1959 revolt and simply took over the country in conjunction with the CIA and U.S. military in Nepal. As far as anybody knows, most of them are still there.

3) Taiwan and CIA air bases: as everybody except the ordinary American citizen knows, Taiwan is headquarters for the CIA's vast air operations in Asia. The CIA base is at Tainan and is run by a front organization called Air Asia, which also has an office in downtown Taipei. Air Asia in turn is a subsidiary of Air America, the CIA line which provides all supply and transport runs for CIA operations in Laos, Burma, Thailand, Vietnam and Cambodia. Air America has its offices in Okinawa; it is a Delaware corporation with about 4,000 employees listed on its records as working in Asia.

The CIA base at Tainan, in southwest Taiwan, was the launching point for all CIA operations against the Chinese mainland, including parachute drops and reconnaissance flights. This is also well known to everybody except the American people.

But the curious fact is that the U.S. news media have not mentioned a word about any of these areas, and neither has the U.S. government. The Chinese side has been completely silent about them as well.

Any real normalization of U.S.-China relations demands that all these CIA operations be ended—and not only in China—and that the American people finally be told the truth about them in detail.

America's Air Guerrillas

Will They Stop Future Vietnams?

What is the full story behind the man being congratulated by President Richard Nixon in the picture above?

The man is U.S. Air Force Brig. Gen. Leroy J. Manor. His name appeared in headlines as the commander of the recent daring attempt to rescue American prisoners of war in North Vietnam. As people around the world know, the mission flew about 100 U. S. commandos in a gallant but futile effort to free POW's at the Sontay camp 23 miles from Hanoi.

Few people know, however, that this brand of daredevil military action is the rule, not the exception, for General Manor and the hush-hush outfit of air commandos he commands, the Special Operations Force (SOF).

"If we can get into it early enough, we can probably keep any insurgency situation from expanding into another Vietnam-sized war," says General Manor, whose SOF has been active in 28 countries, such as Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, Peru, Guatemala, Spain and North Korea.

Secretly established by President John F. Kennedy in April, 1961, the SOF has introduced a new dimension to guerrilla warfare. The hard-trained air commandos use a diversity of aircraft and a fantastic assortment of deadly weapons to harass the enemy.

SOF goes into a friendly country with approval of the State Department, often in collaboration with the CIA or Green Berets.

Top secret missions

Here are several missions, some of them untold, which SOF has carried out:

VIETNAM—The air commandos tasted battle in the spring of 1962 when President Kennedy covertly sent them to the aid of the beleaguered South Vietnamese. Wearing civilian clothes and flying planes with the markings of the South Vietnamese Air Force, the commandos attacked Vietcong concentrations in the jungles. It was a mission that was already interwoven into the fabric of the nation.

by Donald Robinson

SOF staff officers say without hesitation, "We should have gone into South Vietnam back in 1956 when the insurgency was beginning. Then we could easily have smashed it."

THAILAND — Here it's been different. When Hanoi-paid terrorists began infiltrating northeast Thailand in 1964, the Pentagon secretly dispatched a team of 32 air commandos, which has since grown into an entire wing, numbering many hundreds. They have kept the guerrillas on the run ever since, spilling out flares that turn jungle nights into day, then bombing and strafing the area. They've raced Thai troops from hot spot to hot spot near the Laotian border and given them fire support. They've destroyed guerrilla supply caches and cut escape routes.

They've given guerrillas a dose of their own medicine by forming six-man tracking teams who move as stealthily as American Indians. They can trail a guerrilla band through the jungle for weeks on end, even eavesdrop on their campfire conversations, and at the right moment call in an SOF plane for a surprise attack.

NORTH KOREA — The air commandos have undertaken some astonishing clandestine missions in North Korea. Details on the North Korean actions are top secret, but an SOF officer who served in the South during the mid-1960's remembers drawing up plans for commando missions into the North which would knock out some of the enemy's ability to infiltrate into the South.

TIBET — The United States trained a force of Tibetan peasants to counter the threat of Chinese aggression in the late 1950's, when the SOF was merely an unnamed collection of Air Force units working with the CIA.

Col. Fletcher Prouty, a now retired Air Force officer who helped organize the SOF in 1961, tells the story:

"We knew the Chinese were eventually going to come into Tibet, so we started recruiting a resistance force from among the natives. Up to 42,000

Tibetans were put under arms.

"We flew groups of tribesmen from Tibet to Saipan and from there to the Rocky Mountains in Colorado, where the atmosphere is similar to the Himalayas, for combat training. In six weeks they were back in Tibet, and a fairly good ground force was built up. But then Gary Powers' U-2 was shot down in 1960, and President Eisenhower cut off all such missions."

SAUDI ARABIA—In 1963, a routine SOF training mission uncovered an Egypt-sponsored plan for revolution in Saudi Arabia. An SOF officer was flying with a Saudi Arabian Air Force pilot in an American plane over the desert, teaching him counter-guerrilla tactics, when he spotted some strange-looking bundles on the sands below. They landed and found 130 Egyptian parachutes with Czech rifles and ammunition. Cairo was trying to start an uprising against the pro-Western King Faisal, but the Egyptian pilots had missed the drop zone.

A squadron of USAF fighter-bombers soon arrived along Saudi Arabia's borders for a show of strength and President Nasser lost taste for the uprising.

LATIN AMERICA—SOF training of Latin American air forces has been extensive.

An SOF team trained and advised the Bolivian Air Force units that helped to track down the Castroite guerrilla chief Che Guevara.

I watched an SOF team instructing the Guatemalan Air Force in helicopter tactics. The Guatemalans had been employing small helicopters that couldn't fly above 10,500 feet. Any time the Guatemalan airmen pursued guerrillas into the towering mountains, the Communists climbed beyond reach and shot down at the "choppers" with impunity.

The SOF got them three big Bell helicopters from the U.S. that could soar higher than any mountain in Guatemala. Guatemalan pilots were taught how to maneuver the new "choppers" in the violent winds, how to land troops undisturbed, and how to attack enemy strongpoints.

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NATIONALISM UNDIMINISHED

Tibetan Guerrillas Waning

By HENRY S. BRADSHAW
Star Staff Writer

NEW DELHI — After 15 years of desperate resistance to Chinese colonialism, the Tibetan guerrilla movement is dying out. Its fight is recognized by the exiled Dalai Lama as useless, its cause hopeless.

But the Tibetan people are continuing to oppose Chinese rule. Nine Chinese-educated Tibetans serving as junior officials of the Chinese regime were recently shot publicly in Lhasa for subversive activities.

This and similar cases have shown that years of Chinese indoctrination have failed to destroy nationalism in the high, mountainous land north of the Himalayas.

This nationalism is now expressed primarily in passive ways, however. The guerrilla forces which fought the occupying Chinese army have been ground down.

Dalai Lama's Order

Heavy attrition of these forces, the strength of the Chinese, and the Chinese policy of retaliation for guerrilla raids have combined to make further fighting inside Tibet useless. Guerrilla activity cannot loosen the Chinese grip.

The Dalai Lama, Tibet's spiritual leader now living in north India, has sent word that armed resistance should stop.

He cannot, however, be certain of controlling all guerrilla bands. Those in the eastern region of Kham — the Kham-pa warriors whose fierce reputation caused the name of Khampas to be given to guerrillas from all regions of Tibet — might occasionally strike again.

A second category of guer-

rilas, those living in Himalayan border areas of Nepal who have conducted sporadic raids into Tibet, is dwindling. Chinese defenses are tightening and age is catching up.

Third Category

The relief program for the 80,000 or more Tibetan refugees in India has now undertaken to settle these Nepal-based guerrillas as farmers in Central India.

A third category remains. It consists of Tibetans trained by the Indian army for guerrilla activities inside Tibet if India should become involved in a war with China, as in 1962.

Young Tibetans from the refugee community are continuing to join this secret force.

Communist China reasserted the old imperial Chinese claim to Tibet in 1950 and fully occupied the mostly bleak land in 1951. The first armed resistance began in Kham about four years later.

It spread, leading to the 1959 uprising in the Tibetan capital, Lhasa, against Chinese control. The Dalai Lama fled to India and intensive guerrilla warfare raged for several years until the Chinese tightened military control.

CIA Role Charged

The Chinese have repeatedly charged that the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency aided and abetted the guerrillas.

An accumulation of evidence over the past decade indicates that this is something more than the usual Communist accusation of CIA skullduggery. There is reason to believe there has been CIA involvement in guerrilla activity inside Tibet and in the operations of the forces in Nepal.

There is, furthermore, reason to believe that American and Indian interests were linked in this involvement. Whether there is continued U.S. interest in the Indian-trained Tibetan force is less clear.

Despite the inability to maintain fighting forces in Tibet, efforts continue to be made to keep an intelligence network going.

Tight Security

This is made difficult by tight Chinese security checks. Each village has a control system which makes strangers hard to hide.

The Chinese have tried to use Tibetans in their administration. Youths were taken away from Tibet beginning in the early 1950s for education in Central China. Some of these Chinese-trained Tibetans were involved.

In October, 16 young Tibetan junior administrators and translators were arrested. The exact charges are unavailable here but involved opposition to Chinese control.

The 16 were tried publicly. Nine were then shot six or seven weeks ago.

Earlier this year the Chinese sent one of their senior Tibetan officials to Lhasa to try to win greater cooperation from the people.

He is Sange Yishi, known by his Chinese name Sas Tian Pow. When outflankers of Mao Tse-Tung's Red army passed through the eastern fringes of the Tibetan ethnic area during the "long march" 35 years ago, the young Sange joined or was abducted by them.

He rose in the Communist movement to control of a Tibetan ethnic region east of Tibet proper before his recent transfer to Lhasa.

Super-Secret Missions

CIA's Spy Teams Inside Red China

STATINTL

Tribesmen On Roving Patrols

By Michael Morrow
Chronicle Foreign Service

Houei Sai, Laos

This sleepy Mekong river town is as close as a journalist with any regard for his safety can get to a secret CIA outpost which is the staging area for armed reconnaissance teams being inserted by the United States into China.

Sources close to the CIA pinpoint the staging area at a small mountain valley with an airstrip called Nam Lieu (Nam Yu) 15 minutes' flying time north of Houei Sai. According to the same highly reliable sources, "there is always a team in China."

The teams are equipped with American small arms, a special three-pound radio with a range of 400 miles, and other special gear. Their missions are to tap Chinese telegraph lines, watch roads and do other types of intelligence gathering. Teams have gone as far as 200 miles into China.

Each team is said to consist of about 15 men, most of whom are Yao hill tribesmen. Yao are used because this tribe lives in large numbers along the mountainous frontiers of Laos, Thailand and China. There

are approximately 2 million Yao living inside China, and some of the guerrillas have family connections there. Men and Lao Theung tribesmen are also used for similar reasons.

The teams are normally flown to a sod airstrip known as "Site 93" or "Moung Moune" about 20 kilometers north of Nam Lieu, near the Mekong river where it forms a border with Burma.

Sometimes they are put down right on the banks of the Mekong by helicopter. They carry instantly inflatable rubber rafts to use crossing the Mekong into Burma. From Burma they continue northwest, entering China about 50 kilometers from Site 93.

The teams from Nam Lieu are gone three to four months, maintaining contact by radio with Nam Lieu and at a small mountain valley with airplanes which fly close to the China border in order to pick up their broadcasts.

On at least one occasion an airplane has been almost shot down for straying into China. During July 1968, an Air America "porter" single-engine plane with two aboard crossed the Chinese frontier near the tri-borders of Burma, Laos and China. Parts of both wings were blown away by anti-aircraft fire but the plane was able to limp back to base.

Several of the teams inserted into China have been captured, and some have switched allegiances, returning to Nam Lieu as counter-spies.

CHINESE

There has been at least one occasion when a returning team was captured and killed with it. During 1962, five lo-

cal Chinese functionaries caught up in the purges of the Cultural Revolution in China defected to a Nam Lieu reconnaissance team.

They were brought to Nam Lieu by the team. There they were well treated by the Americans for a time but eventually turned over to the Royal Laotian Government.

According to sources close to the CIA the five were thrown into the Laotian equivalent of a "tiger's cage," a 12 by 12 foot pit exposed to the elements and without sanitation facilities, and eventually executed.

DIRECTED

Like most CIA operations in Laos, the one at Nam Lieu is directed from a super-secret headquarters at Udornthaburi in Northeast Thailand. There are four Americans at Nam Lieu, however, headed by a rough-and-tumble veteran clandestine guerrilla organizer named Anthony Poe.

In addition to activities inside China, Poe and his team also work with hill tribesmen in the area, organizing, training, equipping and resupplying them. There is also a joint operation between the "SGU" (special guerrilla units) and Thai Army which they direct at Xieng Lom south of Houei Sai on the Lao-Thai border.

Poe is a legendary figure in Laos, known best for his dislike of journalists, disregard for orders and radio codes, capacity for Lao wit and expertise at clandestine guerrilla operations.

He is an ex-Marine non-commissioned officer, wounded in World War II. He remained in Asia after

World War II. In the '50s he helped organize Tibetan CIA-aided insurgents, escorted them to Colorado for training and finally went back with them into Tibet.

Later he worked in the Thai-Cambodian border area with the "Khmer Blue" anti-Sihanouk guerrillas receiving assistance from the CIA, and in other parts of Thailand with other guerrilla groups for a total of five years.

He has been in and out of Laos since before the Geneva Accords of 1962, and was one of the first Americans involved in arming and training hill tribes paramilitary groups in Laos.

He refuses to have his picture taken, and once literally threw a journalist's camera away for taking a picture of him. He has refused to obey higher orders commanding him to commit his paramilitary guerrillas to large-scale attacks away from their home area, and often disregards radio procedures.

Those who know him say his drinking stems from the dangerous life he leads, particularly the flying he does through the treacherous mountains of northern Laos.

Poe is highly respected by some but hated by others involved in secret operations in Laos for his brusque and stubborn manner. He is said to prefer working with the hill tribes to working with Americans and looks down on most American operations because of their heavy reliance on American personnel.

Poe is said not to have been back to the U.S. in 15 years. He is perhaps the only American legally married to a woman of the hill tribes